

This is a historic day for the Palestinian people and for the people of the Middle East.

America and all free nations strongly support the efforts of the Palestinian people to create lasting democratic institutions. These efforts—including today's Presidential elections and the parliamentary elections that will follow in several months—are essential for the establishment of a sovereign, independent, viable, democratic, and peaceful Palestinian state that can live alongside a safe and secure Israel. These elections are further proof that, when given a choice, all peoples seek to live in liberty and to choose their own government.

The United States stands ready to help the Palestinian people realize their aspirations. The new Palestinian President and his cabinet face critical tasks ahead, including fighting terrorism, combating corruption, building reformed and democratic institutions, and reviving the Palestinian economy. We look forward to working with him and the Palestinian people to address these challenges and to advance the cause of Middle East peace consistent with the vision I set forth on June 24, 2002, of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Other countries also have constructive and vital roles to play. Israel must help to improve the humanitarian and economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza and follow through with the Disengagement Plan. The Arab states must take concrete steps with all parties to create a regional environment conducive to peace, lend financial support to the Palestinian people, and refuse to assist or harbor terrorists. The United States is looking carefully at how we can best organize and fund our own efforts to help the parties achieve a lasting peace.

**Statement on the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Comprehensive Peace Agreement**  
*January 9, 2005*

I congratulate the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement. I thank all the officials of

the United States Government who have worked hard to help achieve this agreement, including Secretary of State Colin Powell, former Special Envoy for Sudan, Ambassador John Danforth, and the Special Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios. I also thank the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which sponsored the talks, and the Government of Kenya, which hosted them, and the Governments of Norway and the United Kingdom and the African Union, which played constructive roles for peace.

Both sides should be proud of this accomplishment. The difficult work of implementation must now begin. Only the implementation of this agreement in good faith can result in long-term peace and development.

As we celebrate this positive movement toward peace in the longstanding North-South conflict, we remember the conflict in Darfur and the suffering it causes. This comprehensive peace agreement should serve as an inspiration and model for both sides in their work toward negotiating a peaceful resolution of the Darfur conflict. I call on the Government of Sudan and on all Darfur rebel groups to live up to their cease-fire commitments, to end atrocities, and to allow the free movement of humanitarian workers and supplies. The United States will continue to assist the people of Darfur in reaching a just and lasting peace.

**Remarks Following a Briefing on Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunamis Disaster Relief and an Exchange With Reporters**

*January 10, 2005*

**The President.** Mr. Secretary, welcome back. I want to thank Secretary Powell and Andrew Natsios and Mike Brown and Marc Grossman for taking the lead on behalf of our Government and the American people and providing relief for the victims of the tsunamis.

The Secretary has given me a extensive briefing on what he has seen, on the unbelievable damage, particularly in Banda Aceh.

He's also brought me up to date on the extraordinary efforts by the United States Government and the United States people, along with governments around the world, to provide much needed relief to those who've suffered. We're now entering a second phase of providing for rehabilitation to these affected societies as well as a reconstruction effort.

And as the Secretary said yesterday, the Government of the United States is committed to helping the people who suffer. We're committed today, and we will be committed tomorrow. The outpouring of support from the citizens of our country has been more than heartening. It has been very strong. And I want to thank those who have felt like—felt the need to contribute directly to the relief efforts. I urge them to go to the [usafreedomcorps.gov](http://usafreedomcorps.gov) web site to make sure that their cash contributions are funneled to programs which are having the necessary effect of providing relief, eventually rehabilitation and reconstruction, to those who have suffered.

And so, Mr. Secretary, I want to thank you. Andrew, I'm looking forward to going over to your headquarters to thank those NGOs who have been working hard as well as those in your agency who have worked so incredibly hard to show the compassion and decency of the American people during this time of extraordinary crisis.

I'll answer a couple of questions. Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press].

#### ***Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunamis Disaster Relief***

**Q.** Thank you, Mr. President. This long-term commitment by the United States to the Indian Ocean region—what specifically does that mean? Does it mean more dollars above the \$350 million? What are you—what are you prepared to do?

**The President.** Well, we'll see. I think the important thing is to make sure that, as one person noted the other day, that the dollars are demand-driven. In other words, the key is to provide immediate relief, which we are doing, and then to work with governments and the United Nations to assess the needs, the intermediate-term needs and the long-term needs, to make sure the money that

is available actually achieves a coordinated objective. And that's what we're in the process of doing.

In other words, these men went in—in to make sure that the money that we had put up is being applied to provide necessary relief. And now we're in the process of helping to rehabilitate and reconstruct the societies. And they're beginning to focus—the demand is beginning to focus, particularly on the Banda Aceh region. That is the part of the world that is going to require the most intense effort by our—by the governments around the world.

Rosey [James Rosen, FOX News].

#### ***Palestinian Presidential Elections***

**Q.** Sir, is there a lesson—is there a lesson in the Palestinian elections that the Iraqi people should see? And what is this administration going to do to build on this election in the Middle East region?

**The President.** Well, first, I want to offer my congratulations to Mr. Abu Mazen. I look forward to talking with him at the appropriate time. I look forward to welcoming him here to Washington if he chooses to come here. I look forward to helping to make sure that the conference in London, a conference all aimed at helping the Palestinians develop the institutions necessary to support Abu Mazen's vision of a peaceful, active, vibrant state, to become reality. And so we are—this is a man who has been elected by what appears to be a good-sized vote. I'm heartened by the elections, and I'm also looking forward to the Iraqi elections on January the 30th.

This is an extraordinary year, when you think about it. In the first month of a new year, there will be an election in the Palestinian territory and there will be an election in Iraq. Who could have possibly envisioned an election in Iraq at this point in history? And yet we're going to have an election. And I'm sure there are—a lot of people are incredibly excited about the thought of having an election in Iraq inside the Iraqi territory, except for a handful who want to stop democracy, because they understand what an election means.

And so I'm—as a democrat, as a person who believes in democracy—a Republican

democrat, I might add—as someone who believes that everybody has a right to live in a free society and everybody wants to live in a free society, the month of January 2005 is an extraordinary month.

Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

### ***Israeli and Palestinian Roles Following Elections***

**Q.** Are there any steps that Israel can take to help the Abbas position, any confidence-building measures? And Abbas called Israel the “Zionist enemy” on the campaign trail. Was that rhetoric helpful?

**The President.** I think Israel did help with the elections. I know the Secretary worked hard on making it clear to Israel that it was very important that voters in Jerusalem be allowed to have access to the polls. And the initial reports we got back, and on the briefing that the Secretary gave me today about the initial reports on the election, was that there was better than good movement. I mean, it was better than we thought a month ago, that the Israelis did understand the need to have an election.

I think it’s going to be very important for Israel to fulfill its obligation on the withdrawal from the territories that they have pledged to withdraw from. It is essential that Israel keep a vision of two states, living side by side in peace, and that as the Palestinians begin to develop the institutions of a state, that the Israeli Government support the development of those institutions and recognize that it is essential that there be a viable economy, that there be a viable health care system, that people be—that people be allowed to start building a society that meets their hopes and needs. And Israel can play and must play an important part of the development of a Palestinian state.

At the same time, it’s essential that the Palestinian leadership consolidate security forces, so that they can fight off those few who still have the desire to destroy Israel as a part of their philosophy and those few who fear there to be a free vote amongst the Palestinian people.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President-elect Mahmoud Abbas

(Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **Remarks at the United States Agency for International Development**

*January 10, 2005*

Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. Good morning. A little more than 2 weeks ago, the world witnessed one of the worst displays of natural destruction in history. Since that time, the world has witnessed one of history’s greatest displays of compassion.

Most of you are members of this great organization, the United States Agency for International Development. Some of you are members of nongovernmental organizations. All of you are playing an important role in that compassionate response. The world has taken notice, and the American people are grateful.

Throughout the many affected regions, the loss of life and property is immense. People and nations throughout Asia and around the world are working to ease the suffering brought on by this terrible disaster. The international community has responded with generosity and compassion, and the men and women of USAID have been at the center of that response. And I’m here to thank you.

I want to thank our Secretary of State for his fantastic service to our Nation. I want to thank him for recently leading a delegation to the affected areas to express our Nation’s deepest concerns. I want to thank him for keeping my little brother straight. [Laughter] But the Secretary is—any time he represents America does so with such dignity and strength. And Mr. Secretary, you did so again, and the world better understands our heart as a result of your trip. And I thank you for it.

And I appreciate Andrew’s work. [Applause] Andrew, you should take that as a good sign. [Laughter] Either that, or it’s all your close relatives who are here. [Laughter] But I really do want to thank Andrew for not only helping to organize the effort but